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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

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CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[11. Mideast](#)

[12. U.S.-Israel Relations](#)

Key stories in the media:

All media bannered Monday's suicide bombing in Dimona, in which a

woman was killed and 48 others wounded. The media reported that the IDF fears that the terrorists may have infiltrated Israel through the Sinai following the Gaza border breach two weeks ago. However, leading media quoted defense officials as saying that there is a growing consensus that the two terrorists had come from the West Bank, entering the Negev via a 26-km gap in the southern section of the West Bank security fence. Major media quoted Hamas's armed wing as claiming responsibility for the attack and that the bombers came from Hebron. Yediot quoted Hamas as saying that the target was chosen because of its proximity to Israel's nuclear reactor. Maariv noted that this was Hamas's first bombing since August 2004. Speaking on Israel Radio this morning, Tzachi Hanegbi, the Chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, said that the Hamas leadership should be targeted.

Ha'aretz reported that the Foreign Ministry is recommending that Egypt double the number of soldiers it has stationed along its borders with Israel and Gaza -- something that Cairo has long wanted to do, but that Jerusalem has hitherto vetoed. Since the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty strictly limits the forces that Egypt can deploy, any increase would require Israel's consent. The Defense Ministry and the IDF oppose any effort reopen the treaty, saying it would set a dangerous precedent.

The media reported that on Monday evening the Knesset approved PM Ehud Olmert's speech in response to the final Winograd report. The speech was approved in a non-binding, purely symbolic vote, by a majority of 59 to 53. One Knesset members abstained from voting. The statement was approved despite the fact that six coalition MKs -- Ophir Pines-Paz (Labor), Shelly Yachimovich (Labor), Eitan Cabel (Labor), Danny Yatom (Labor), Avigdor Yizhaki (Kadima) and Marina Solodkin (Kadima) -- voted against the statement. Four Arab MKs were absent, as was former Defense Minister Amir Peretz. Opposition leader Binyamin Netanyahu likened Olmert to the "captain of the Titanic." Yediot reported that Defense Minister Ehud Barak did not bother to listen to Olmert's speech and later said it was cynical. A commotion broke out in the Knesset before the vote, after bereaved parents began screaming at Olmert during the speech. During his speech, Olmert said he "carries the full responsibilities of the failures" of the war, although he defended the decision to go to war against Hizbullah.

Yediot quoted Ofer Dekel, Israel's chief negotiator for securing the release of abducted soldiers, as saying that the publication of a letter by Gilad Shalit jeopardizes the deal to bring him back home. Leading media reported that Germany was instrumental in obtaining a sign of life from Shalit.

Ha'aretz reported that on Monday IDF troops killed a senior operative of the Popular Resistance Committees in the northern Gaza Strip and two armed Palestinians in Qabatiyah near Jenin. Israel Radio reported that this morning Qassam rockets fell on two factories in the Sderot area.

Leading media reported on Iran's inauguration of its Space Research Center. Yediot quoted Israeli experts as saying that the center is a diversion for the development of advanced missiles. Maariv reported that Mossad Director Meir Dagan told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Monday that Iran will have nuclear weapons in three years. The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel is expected to press Austrian FM Ursula Plassnik for greater cooperation on meaningful economic sanctions against Iran. Israel Radio reported that Iran complained to India for launching an Israeli spy satellite.

Ha'aretz reported that on Monday the Lebanese government decided to lodge a complaint with the UN Security Council for a cross-border incident that killed one Lebanese man and wounded another.

Yediot quoted two American citizens in Israel -- the Democrat Dan Cook (phon.) and the Republican Mark Zell -- as saying that it is important for the 100,000 Americans living in Israel to cast votes in the presidential election.

Yediot reported that Tal Zilberstein, an Israeli political consultant who in the past worked for Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert, was part of the American-Israeli team GPS that helped Serbian President Boris Tadic get re-elected.

Ha'aretz reported that the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem will relocate from East Jerusalem to the neighborhood of Arnona later this year, a move expected to improve services and slightly decrease the long wait times to register births of American citizens. The Jerusalem Post reported that on Monday the Consulate General announced that it was entertaining a number of options to address the problem.

The Jerusalem Post printed a special op-ed article by Republican presidential contender Mike Huckabee, who says that the U.S. and Israel must jointly "defeat Islamofascism."

Ha'aretz reported that the Israeli airline Israir plans to operate regular flights to Miami and Las Vegas. New York is presently its only U.S. destination.

Yediot reported that the American actor Denzel Washington will make his first visit to Israel around Israel's 60th anniversary.

II. Mideast:

Summary:

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Times of emergency sometimes demand emergency steps, and the current threat of terror demands more courageous cooperation with Egypt."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Israel should actually do what Egypt anyway accuses Israel of doing: press the U.S. to treat Egypt like Syria so long as Cairo acts like Damascus."

Correspondent Shahar Ginossar wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Legitimate domestic criticism of the management of the [Second Lebanon] War gives encouragement to the Tehran-Beirut axis and provides Hizbullah with everlasting evidence to justify its violent approach."

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in Ha'aretz: "The most important thing at the moment is political stability. Barak and Olmert need to work together."

Columnist and former IDF Intelligence chief Shlomo Gazit wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "[Barak] made a decision without any commitment by Olmert. This will be an erroneous decision without a commitment about peace."

Block Quotes:

II. "Common to Dimona and Cairo"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (2/5): "According to Hamas's announcement last night, the two terrorists responsible for Monday morning's attack in Dimona set out from Hebron. At the same time, the original and reasonable assumption that the bombers had moved from Gaza, via Sinai, to the Negev was based on the profusion of intelligence warnings that had multiplied following the breach of the border between Gaza and Egypt. These warnings are still current, and continue to concern the security establishment. This situation was created by the helplessness of Egypt, which did not hasten to close the breaches, and the permission it gave to Gaza civilians to enter its territory. But it was also caused by carelessness, or at least excessive complacence on the part of Israel, which for years has not bothered to build a real fence along its long border with Egypt.... Times of emergency sometimes demand emergency steps, and the current threat of terror demands more courageous cooperation with Egypt. In the past, Egypt proved its determination to fight terror even if, like Israel, it has not always succeeded in eliminating it. This is currently another difficult test of Egypt's determination and its commonality of interests with Israel, a commonality that rests on peace agreements between the two countries."

II. "Seal the Borders"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (2/5): "The urgent task is both for Israel to complete the missing sections of the West Bank security fence and seal its border with Egypt and, critically too, for Egypt to seal its border with Gaza. We cannot go back to the status quo ante, where weapons and money flowed into and terrorists flowed into and out of Gaza courtesy of Egypt's blind eye. It is completely irresponsible for Egypt to allow Hamas to strengthen itself in Gaza, even aside from Israel's interests and Egypt's responsibilities toward the peace process that the U.S. has been trying to launch. Hamas, after all, is allied to the Muslim Brotherhood, which Egypt has ruthlessly suppressed for years.

Evidently, the Egyptian government feels little external or internal pressure to take serious steps to cut off Hamas's weapons lifeline.

The fault for this lack of pressure lies with the U.S., but first and foremost, with Israel. The U.S. has quietly and ineffectively raised the issue with Egypt for years. But it is understandable that the U.S. government cannot get itself more exercised about the problem than Israel is. And it is seems that Olmert places his relationship with President Hosni Mubarak above the emphatic, insistent pursuit of the demand that Egypt shut down the weapons flow to Gaza. This must change.... [Among other things], Israel should actually do what Egypt anyway accuses Israel of doing: press the U.S. to treat Egypt like Syria so long as Cairo acts like Damascus."

III. "Nasrallah's Victory"

Correspondent Shahar Ginossar wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (2/5): "The turning a blind eye to the debate in the Arab world by members of the Winograd Commission is causing tremendous harm to Israel. The report ... should have taken into account the fact that legitimate domestic criticism of the management of the [Second Lebanon] War gives encouragement to the Tehran-Beirut axis and provides Hizbullah with everlasting evidence to justify its violent approach.... Assuming that the Winograd Commission had expected this, it should have acted accordingly. For instance, during its press conference it should have conveyed an additional, pointed, and clear message to the hundreds of millions of Muslims who were watching it live -- words to the rejectionist camp that initiated the war, which, as is well-known, caused a greater disaster to them than to the residents of northern Israel."

IV. "The Man Who Saved Olmert"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in Ha'aretz (2/5): "The good of the country, getting the army back on its feet and making diplomatic headway are more important than a promise [to quit the government] made [by Ehud Barak] under different circumstances -- all the more so, when there are no fabulous alternatives lining up that would make going to the polls worthwhile. The most important thing at the moment is political stability. Barak and Olmert need to work together. They need to establish mutual trust and pay no attention to provocations. Formally, it may have been necessary to rap Olmert on the knuckles and insist that he take ministerial responsibility as head of the system, but the good of the country comes first. You don't switch horses in midstream. Toying with the idea of early elections will only turn Ehud and Ehud into lame ducks at the least desirable moment."

IV. "No Resignation and No Peace"

Columnist and former IDF Intelligence chief Shlomo Gazit wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (2/5): "[If I were Ehud Barak, I would ask Ehud Olmert]: 'How do you propose to face Palestinian demands on the core issues, and how you intend to secure a political majority in Israel for an agreement? How Olmert will succeed in surmounting those obstacles is unclear. It is doubtful whether he believes in his own pronouncement -- they are no more than a polite answer to Washington's expectations and a lever for obtaining popular support in Israel. As far as is known, Barak has not asked Olmert. He made a decision without any commitment by Olmert. This will be an erroneous decision without a commitment about peace."

Summary:

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "As a 'slightly pro-Israeli' Democratic president, Obama is 'worth' much more to Israel than a 'very' pro-Israeli Republican president like John McCain.... [But] I wish for [Hillary Clinton's] victory."

Block Quotes:

"Good for the Jews"

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (2/5): "Obama ... may turn out to be an unexpected asset for Israel. He is good for the Jews, because he enjoys great popularity among those segments of American and world public opinion that are secretly or openly hostile to Israel. He is their new oracle. If he tells them -- as he has -- that Israel has the right to exist forever as a Jewish state, and that the Palestinians can subsequently forget about the right return, his statements will have an influence and an echo among publics that Israeli public relations do not touch. As a 'slightly pro-Israeli' Democratic president, Obama is 'worth' much more to Israel than a